

Transcription Notes: It sounds as if the interviewee is reading, not speaking.

Estelle F. Beean: With Greene County Bicentennial Oral History, the date is April 4, 1983. The interview is with Georgia Farnsworth. The interviewer is Estelle F. Beean.

Ms. Farnsworth: Negroes came to America with Columbus and records show that they have accompanied virtually all of the discoverers and explorers of this country. They were here when the Indians taught the early settlers tobacco cultivation. They helped to hew the wood out of which the pioneer cabins were built. Records also show that Negroes have played an important role in Greeneville and Greene County for many, many years. Negroes have been interested in the affairs of the city and county government. The first hired city policeman of Greeneville was the late Will Fowler, who served in the late 1800's. Since that time, two Negroes have been hired by the city, Bobby Black and Bobby Blue. Bobby Blue is presently serving on the force. Bobby Black is in insurance work in Kingsport. We have no hired deputies in the county department. The late Will Clem was the first Negro magistrate to serve in the county court. Today Isom Elder and the Rev. C.C. Mills, are Greene County's commissioners.

Roy Olden operated a fine grocery store off on Depot Street near the site of the old Smith house, which is a parking lot today. Will Briscoe operated two grocery stores in the city, one was located on College Street, which was then called Water Street, and the other store was located on Davis Street.

Several restaurants were operated by Negroes years ago. The best known restaurant was owned and operated by the late P.R. Wilson. It was on Depot Street near the former Broyles Rubber Oil Company. Kidwell Barnett and his wife, Will Duncan and his wife, Dave Grant and his wife, and several others operated restaurants on West Depot Street. The late Maggie Grant, the wife of Dave Grant, prepared box lunches and carried them to the station and they were placed on trains so persons could have meals on the train. John Gass and his wife operated a fine rooming and boarding house on Depot Street near the location of the former Service Grocery Store. The Vance brothers, Rufus and Henry, operated a dray business, practically all the hauling in Greeneville was done by these brothers. They also moved the deceased to the cemetery on a flatbed wagon that was covered with fresh straw. After the death of the Vance brothers, Will Vance, Andrew Montgomery, and Arthur L. Hill operated two dry cleaning and pressing clubs on Depot Street. Sam Woodford operated a barber shop on Depot Street. Chancy Carson barbered for a number of years on Depot Street.

Brick making was an interesting occupation in the early years of settlement of Negroes in Greeneville. The Manuel brothers Jess, Levi, Alec, Ambrose, and Bill Manuel followed this trade. They made brick on the late Frank Manuel property on North Main Street where Ms. Anna Lee and Emily Manuel now resides. Many brick kilns were located in other areas of the city and county. The late Dave Manuel, Will Manuel, George Manuel, and Charlie Clem were among Greeneville's finest brick masons. Many homes and buildings in this city and county were built by these men. The Manuel's still follow this trade. Many buildings on Main Street, Irish Street, Depot Street, and many other streets were built by these men and these buildings are standing today. The late Lloyd Farnsworth was a plasterer and concrete contractor whose two sons worked with him in the business, in the city and throughout the county and adjoining cities and counties. They carried the work on for many years after their father's death. They are now

deceased. There were several men who followed the carpentry, plumbing, painting, and auto mechanics trade.

The oldest Negro church in the city is the Tabernacle Presbyterian Church, which was organized about 1867. The first structure was a brick located on Cutler or Halls Street near the Austin Tobacco Company. The first minister was a Rev. Carter, who pastored for more than twenty years. He was succeeded by the Rev. J.H. Fort, who was pastor for more than forty years. After his death, the Rev. J.J. Shephardson served at the church the next five years. Rev. M.R. Flack served as pastor of the church for thirteen years. During his pastoring here, the beautiful sand stone rock edifice was erected on the corner of Wesley Avenue and Henry Street. The present pastor of Tabernacle is the Rev. Rakestraw.

The Jones Memorial African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church was organized about 1870, under the leadership of the Rev. S.W. Jones and a small, but interested group of people. The first structure was a frame building situated between West Main Street and West Irish Street near the late Henry Layman's property. Many ministers served as pastor for this church. The property was sold in 1948 and a new church was built under the leadership of the Rev. E.T. Pugh on the corner of Floral Street adjoining the George Clem School. The cornerstone was laid in 1950. An educational annex was added to the church in 1975 under the pastorate of the late Dr. Celesta Franklin Martin. The Rev. John C. Bruce is now pastoring Jones Memorial Church.

The Tate Chapel Methodist United Episcopal Church was established about 1875, on Wesley Avenue. It was the oldest Methodist church in the East Tennessee Conference, the first East Tennessee annual conference was held at this church in 1880. Renovation of this church was completed in 1922 under the Rev. W. A. Webber. Many ministers through the years have served this congregation. To name a few, were the Rev. S.A. Downs, Rev. Smith, F.B. Beulee, Rev. Gallahar, F. D. Johnson, Edward Cochran, and the present pastor is the Rev. Sam Gargee. This church is now the Tate Chapel United Methodist Church of the Holston Conference.

The Friendship Baptist Church was organized by the Rev. C.W. McGhee. Services were first conducted in a building on Depot and Railroad Street. The first church was built in 1894, on Railroad Street during Rev. Farmer's pastorate. Other ministers who served this congregation were: Rev. Snow, Nathaniel Tolliver, A.R. and J.B. Thompson, H.J. Bailey, and W.M. Stokley. In 1934, under the leadership of Rev. Stokley, the brick church on the corner of Davis and Wesley Street was erected. Other ministers served this congregation, the Rev. C.C. Mills, the present pastor, accepted the call to friendship in 1956. The church has been renovated and an addition added recently, under Rev. Mills.

The Macedonia Baptist Church was started in 1941. The church is located on Davis Street. The Rev. Dorsey was the pastor of this church for a number of years. The Rev. T.A. Northern is the present pastor.

The Church of Christ has been established on Anderson Street for the past twenty-five or thirty years. At first, the members met in homes and conducted revivals in tents before their church was built. Brother Shields, Jackson, and Stephens were instrumental in getting this church started. Brother Richard Shive is leading in the services at the present time.

The Seventh Day Adventist Church was started on Wesley Street in 1949. A Mrs. Biggs started bible study with the late Homer Elder family. This group stayed together and grew in number. Under the work of Elder Walter Artis and Elder Davis and a small group of members, the beautiful Brainard Chapel Seventh Day Adventist Church was constructed in 1952. Others to

serve in this church have been Elders R.C. Brown, Benjamin Jones, Cleveland Houser, and J.E. Gudger, a local person, who has been and is today a loyal servant of the Master. At the present time, Elder Caesar Monroe of Morristown is in charge of the church.

The Full Gospel Mission number two, was organized in February 1976, by evangelist Geraldine Swaggerty of Kingsport. Sister Swaggerty was born and reared in Greeneville. She was greatly helped by the members of the mission in Kingsport. The church is located on Davis Street. Services are conducted weekly by Sister Swaggerty.

The first school for Negroes was the old academy located on Church Street. Where the municipal building is located now. The second school was a small two room brick building on Railroad Street, which was condemned in 1921. The Rev. J.H. Fort and his wife Mrs. Electa Fort and Ms. Adrian McGhee were teachers there for many years.

The school known as Greeneville College was established in the late 1800's, 1880's, on the site where our present George Clem School building is located, or the city office today. Greeneville College was strictly a church school. It was operated by the educational board of the General A. M. E. Zion Church. The first president was Professor Chandler, he was followed by Professor Taylor, and then Professor J.W. Young, who had been the dean of Swift Memorial College at Rogersville, who was called by the church board to serve as the third president of the boarding school. This took place about 1915. Students attended Greeneville College from many states. A new block building was completed in 1922. This school was recognized far and wide as an excellent school. This was the only school for Negroes, since the other school was no longer available. Greeneville College was especially known for its fine music department. President Young remained at the school until 1932, when he accepted the position of General Financial of Secretaries of the A.M.E. Zion Connection. He moved his family to Salisbury, North Carolina where they made their home for many years. He passed several years ago. His son, Dr. J.W. Young, Jr., a native of Greeneville, son of President and Mrs. Young, is serving today as the interim president of Living Stone College in Salisbury, North Carolina. In 1932, the boarding school was closed and the city of Greeneville rented the property from the Zion Church and with two years of high school training, established a public school of junior high school level, under the principalship of Mr. A.M. Gilbert. The school was then called Greeneville College High School. George W. Clem became the principal in 1935, when the city took over. In 1937, the transition from the two year to the four-year type was begun. In 1938, the school became a four-year accredited high school. The class of 1938, consisting of sixteen members, represented the first graduating class in the history of the school composed entirely of Greeneville residents. In 1939, by order of the mayor, and the city board of aldermen, the school was named George Clem as a tribute to the late George W. Clem, former principal. Mrs. Dorothy Clem, R.C. Martin, and E.T. Pugh served as principals of the school until 1949. The beautiful new George Clem School was completed in 1950. In the fall of that year, an enthusiastic faculty was W.F. Taylor as principal and an inspired group of students entered the new school. Otis A. Peeler, was the principal of the school. The aim of the school is to develop mature, integrated individuals. George Clem School sends forth graduates imbued with the desire to serve where best they can. Later, William Jackson was the principal and William Delaney. Bob DeLosure was the last principal of the school before integration.

The Negro Women's Civic Club was organized June 11, 1950, with a charter membership of thirty-six. The slogan of the club is "A Better Greeneville". The club was organized with the

following aims in mind: first to help foster a recreational program for our youth in Greeneville, to encourage our youth to obtain an education and to become good citizens, to assist in all drives for the betterment of Greeneville, to aid our schools and our churches, and to lend assistance to the needy in our community. The club conceived the idea of building a swimming pool to serve the community. This was a big project for a group of women to undertake. Ground was broken for the pool in July 1951, but the lack of funds delayed its completion. The women never ceased to work toward their goal. Construction actually began on June 19, 1954. The pool was dedicated August 7, 1954. On that date, a dream became a reality. Our goal had been reached. Although the swimming pool was a major project, other civic ventures were not to be neglected. The club has participated annually in the Red Cross drives, the polio drives. The club gives a contribution yearly to cripple children's funds. It distributes baskets of food and makes cash donations at Christmas time. The club has assisted schools and the churches on many occasions. Each year the club awarded a \$50 scholarship to the highest ranking senior of the George Clem School, who entered college in the fall, to further his education. As a result of this club, a recreational program was started for our youth. Supervised by a recreation director, a picnic area is now in use, adjacent to the pool. Mrs. Lena B. Lee was the founder of the Negro Women's Civic Club and the following women have served as presidents: Ms. Cash Robinson, Ms. Georgia B. Campbell, Mrs. Margaret Crumb, Ms. Florence Jones, Ms. Maribel Carson, Georgia M. Farnsworth, M. Lucy Conner, Grace Bradley, Josephine Bradley, Anna Lee Manuel, and Audrey Cates.

The promise of what man is yet to do is not based on the things that man has done, but beyond all possible comparison will be the wonder of the things that man will do.

Estelle F. Beean: We want to thank you very much Georgia, for sharing these personal reminisces and recollections. You and nobody else but you could have done this and you've given us these glimpses of Greene County history that are very, very valuable. Thank you very much.